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Greetings Old Dominion Chapter Members

I hope your summer has been amazing! Hopefully you were able to join us at the National Conference. It was a wonderful event filled with great sessions, meaningful connections, and memories that will last for years to come.

If you were not able attend, we're excited to share some wonderful news. The Old Dominion Chapter was recognized with awards for Chapter Operations, Chapter Communications, Chapter Programming, and Membership Growth for 2026! Congratulations and thank you to everyone who helped make these achievements possible.

A special shout-out goes to Pam Spratley and Joyce Fogg for being our top contributors to membership growth—your dedication has made a tremendous impact!

We'd also like to extend a special congratulations to Joyce Fogg, who received the National Legacy Award. This is a well-deserved honor, and we are incredibly proud of you, Joyce!

We hope to see even more of you at our chapter meetings this year.

We look forward to reconnecting and kicking off another successful year together!

Valerie Gardner, CMP, CGMP
President
Old Dominion Chapter

SGMP NEC Conference

The SGMP National Education Conference was practically in our back yard this year in Williamsburg, VA. It was held at the Williamsburg lodge right in the downtown historical area of Williamsburg. The opening reception was at Jamestown at the museum where you could walk down the path to see the ships. If you didn't get a chance to go take in the great education, awards banquet and the sights and sounds, you missed a great conference!

Our chapter had several scholarship award winners this year. If you have never applied for a scholarship, consider applying next year. It can help fund your expenses to attend the National Conference!

This year's winners were:

- Wayne Callis
- Pam Spratley
- Lorna Battles
- Maria Harless
- Sandra Brashear
- Joyce Fogg
- Jo Slack



Maria Harless shared her experience at NEC in this month's issue of Commonwealth Connection. Be sure to check out her article! We will be featuring some of the other winners' experience at NEC in upcoming newsletters, so stay tuned!

Do you remember your first time?

My First SGMP National Education Conference (NEC) by Maria Pratsi Harless

This year I had the opportunity to attend my first SGMP National Education Conference (NEC), held at the beautiful colonial-style Williamsburg Lodge in Williamsburg, Virginia. NEC 2026 offered a wonderful mix of educational breakout sessions, networking opportunities, chapter leadership meetings, and a fundraising silent auction. With America celebrating its 250th Anniversary, Williamsburg was the perfect location for this year's conference, surrounded by the birthplace of so much American history.

The conference officially began on Monday evening with the Chapter Leadership Toast. Getting there proved to be my first NEC adventure. My GPS seemed determined to take me to a dark and somewhat creepy loading dock rather than the front entrance! After finally parking, finding a helpful employee, and getting pointed in the right direction, I made my way to the toast and kicked off the conference on the right foot.

That evening, after a quick change into our red, white, and blue attire, we headed to the Jamestown Settlement. The staff welcomed us with delicious food stations and refreshing beverages—much appreciated on a hot Virginia evening. The Old Dominion Chapter made its way together to view the replicas of the three ships that brought America's first permanent English colonists to Virginia in 1607: the Susan Constant, Godspeed, and Discovery. Remember those names—Jo Slack may quiz you later!

The setting was spectacular. Surrounded by history, friends, and laughter, we enjoyed a beautiful evening before returning to prepare for another full day of learning.

Wednesday and Thursday featured excellent keynote speakers and informative breakout sessions. Each morning, Angie McGrath, Amy Overstreet, and I started the day with a group walk through Colonial Williamsburg. Along the way, we enjoyed daily history lessons about the Governor's Palace and the Capitol Building, along with some entertaining ghost stories. One particularly memorable tale involved the Peyton-Randolph House, considered by many to be one of the most haunted homes in America, with more than 30 recorded deaths associated with the house.

My favorite breakout session was **"The Language of Leadership: Science-Based Techniques for Better Workplace Communication,"** presented by Jamie Turner. The session focused on self-awareness and how our perceptions influence communication. One exercise had participants draw a capital "Q" on their foreheads. Depending on which direction the tail of the Q faced, attendees learned interesting insights about themselves and how they relate to others. Jamie also shared seven practical communication techniques, including one simple but memorable tip: look into someone's left eye to create a deeper connection. So don't be surprised if you notice NEC attendees staring intently into your left eye!

Wednesday evening also gave us the opportunity to dress up and enjoy the NEC Gala, a wonderful evening of celebration, fellowship, and recognition. It was the perfect opportunity to connect with friends old and new while celebrating the accomplishments of SGMP chapters and members from across the country.

While I gained valuable professional knowledge and practical skills throughout the conference, the true highlight was the camaraderie. Whether reconnecting with long-time friends or building new relationships, the connections made during NEC are what make SGMP so special.

I am grateful for the opportunity to attend my first NEC and look forward to seeing everyone again at the 2027 National Education Conference in Pittsburgh!

April 2026 SGMP Chapter Meeting

The Category is... SGMP Excellence!

By Michelle D. Hawkins, CGMP Emeritus

Get ready to trade traditional presentations for buzzers, brainpower, and a little friendly competition! This month, our chapter meeting transformed into a live game-show experience inspired by Who Wants to Be a Millionaire? — SGMP CGMP Special Edition.

Attendees were divided into teams of four and challenged to answer rapid-fire questions based on general knowledge from the SGMP CGMP exam. With only 30 seconds on the clock for each question, teams had to think quickly, collaborate effectively, and rely on their collective expertise to stay in the game. As the competition progressed, the point values increased along with the level of difficulty, creating an exciting atmosphere filled with strategy, teamwork, and plenty of laughs.

The excitement continued with a second thrill-seeking, adrenaline-rush challenge — Jeopardy! Teams worked together to answer questions based on the CGMP exam curriculum, testing both their knowledge and teamwork skills under pressure. Correct answers earned teams the designated dollar amount, adding another layer of competitive fun and engagement to the experience.

Andrew Marks, CGMP, Assistant Director of Tourism for the Office of Economic Development and Tourism with the City of Lynchburg, guided attendees through this engaging and high-energy experience, encouraging participants to sharpen their understanding of SGMP core competencies while strengthening collaboration and communication skills with fellow industry professionals.

From quick-thinking teamwork to high-stakes challenge questions, this meeting proved that professional development can be just as entertaining as it is educational. The session delivered the perfect combination of networking, education, and interactive learning while reinforcing valuable industry knowledge in a memorable and entertaining way.

One thing is certain —
when it comes to learning and leadership, the category is... SGMP Excellence!



Chapter Board Retreat

The chapter board held their annual two-day board retreat in Williamsburg this year in June following NEC to discuss chapter goals and to plan for the upcoming year. The chapter board is not all work with no play. After a long day of meeting, the board took relaxing outing over to Busch Gardens to enjoy good food, adventure, have a little fun on the Merry Go Round, and some even took a roller coaster ride!

Consider being a board member. It's a great way to get to know your fellow chapter members, network, build long lasting friendships and reap many benefits from your chapter membership!



National SGMP Webinars Are Ready to Watch On-Demand

Missed the previous webinars?

Log in to the members-only site to watch at your own pace. You may view all SGMP recorded webinars on our video library.

Upcoming Meeting Dates

- October 7, 2026
- November 4, 2026
- No Chapter Meeting in December

NEC 2026 PHOTOS



SAVE THE DATE

SGMP National Education Conference

2027

May 4–6, 2027

Wyndham Grand Downtown
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Society of Government Meeting Professionals

The Certified Government Meeting Professional designation ("CGMP") is designed for planners and suppliers whose work is governed by the rules and regulations of the federal government.

Individuals who have earned their CGMP have obtained the highest designation available that is specifically for government meeting professionals.



Chapter Board & Events

June 2026-June 2027 Old Dominion Chapter Board of Directors

President
Valerie Gardner, CMP, CGMP

First Vice President
Lorna Battles, CGMP

Second Vice President
Andrew Marks, CGMP

Secretary
Angela McGrath

Treasurer
Teresa Lamb

Planner Director
Pamela Spratley, CGMP

Supplier Director
Maria Harless

Supplier Director
Jo Slack, CGMP

Immediate Past President
Joyce Fogg

Awards, Awards, Awards

Congratulations Old Dominion for being first place and bringing home several awards from the National Education Conference 2026!

- Chapter Operations
- Chapter Communications
- Chapter Programming
- Membership Growth

Joyce Fogg won the 2025 Old Dominion Chapter Legacy Award. This year she has received the 2026 Legacy Award from National! CONGRATULATIONS JOYCE!!

Watch this video and learn more about why SGMP members love SGMP so much!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xBPd8B3LfjI>



September 2026 Old Dominion SGMP Chapter Meeting Recap

Embassy Suites by Hilton Richmond

By David Berkoski, CMM, CGMP,

Kalahari Resort & Convention Center

On September 9, the Old Dominion SGMP Chapter held its monthly meeting at the Embassy Suites by Hilton in Richmond. The event was well attended and brought together a diverse group of meeting planners and supplier members.

The meeting opened with chapter updates and announcements regarding upcoming events. Members were informed of the October Pumpkin Carving Contest, which will serve as a fundraising initiative for the chapter. Attendees are encouraged to showcase their creativity by bringing a carved pumpkin to the October meeting, where entries will be judged by fellow members. Voting will be conducted through donations of \$1.00 per vote, with all proceeds benefiting future chapter programs and events.

The chapter also celebrated a membership milestone, having grown to 73 members. While this achievement reflects the continued strength of the organization, recruiting new members remains a priority. Members are encouraged to invite colleagues and industry associates to attend future meetings and experience the networking, professional development, and educational opportunities SGMP provides. Four guests attended the September meeting, and three expressed a verbal commitment to joining the chapter in the near future.

The educational portion of the meeting featured James Fritz, Associate Professor at Virginia Commonwealth University, as the guest speaker. Professor Fritz, an expert in artificial intelligence, led an engaging and thought-provoking discussion on AI Ethics, Accountability, and Organizational Responsibility. The presentation explored complex questions surrounding decision-making, liability, and responsibility in an era where AI systems are increasingly capable of autonomous actions. The topic generated significant audience participation and highlighted the need for continued dialogue and understanding as AI becomes more integrated into both professional and personal environments.

As artificial intelligence continues to transform industries and the way we work, embracing and understanding these technologies will be increasingly important for professionals across all sectors.

The meeting concluded with an exciting announcement regarding the January chapter meeting, which will be held at the new Kalahari Resort and Convention Center. Attendees will have access to guest rooms at the government per diem rate, providing an excellent opportunity to experience the resort and its amenities firsthand. Members are encouraged to mark their calendars and plan to attend what promises to be an outstanding event.